

Message Text

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21

ACTION NEA-09

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R 281240Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7212

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMCONSUL BOMBAY

AMCONSUL CALCUTTA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMCONSUL MADRAS

USLO PEKING

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 2843

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, IN, UR

SUBJECT: VISIT OF SOVIET DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO TO INDIA

1. OUR INITIAL IMPRESSION IS THAT DEFENSE MINISTER GRECHKO'S VISIT TO INDIA FEBRUARY 24-27 WENT WELL FROM BOTH SIDES' POINTS OF VIEW ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED AT THE END OF THE VISIT IS NOTABLY DEVOID OF REAL CONTENT. THE COMMUNIQUE ASSERTS THAT THE VISIT "SIGNIFICANTLY CONTRIBUTED" TO FURTHER STRENGTHENING INDO-SOVIET RELATIONS, AND THE INDIAN PRESS HAS CONCLUDED THAT COLLABORATION IN THE MILITARY FIELD IS THE ASPECT OF THESE RELATIONS WHICH WILL BENEFIT MOST. THE FEBRUARY 28 EDITION OF THE CPI DAILY PATRIOT QUOTES UNNAMED SOURCES AS SAYING ONE RESULT "UNDOUBTEDLY WOULD BE CLOSER COOPERATION" IN DEFENSE PRODUCTION. THE INDEPENDENT STATESMAN FINDS SIMILAR "INDICATIONS," AND COMMENTS THAT MORE ADVANCED SOVIET TECHNOLOGY WILL LIKELY BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PRODUCE AN IMPROVED VERSION OF THE MIG, AND THAT THE INDIAN NAVY WILL ALSO BENEFIT. ANOTHER INDIAN DAILY

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FINDS NOTEWORTHY THAT THE GRECHKO PARTY, WHICH INCLUDED BOTH

THE SOVIET NAVAL AND AIR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEFS, HELD DETAILED TALKS WITH DEFENSE MINISTER SWARAN SINGH ON EACH OF THEIR THREE DAYS IN DELHI.

2. GRECHKO HAD ONE NINETY MINUTE MEETING WITH THE PRIME MINISTER AND DELIVERED TO HER A PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM GENERAL SECRETARY BREZHNEV. THE COMMUNIQUE CONTAINS ONE SENTENCE WHICH OBSERVES INTERPRET AS CONFIRMATION THAT THE LIFTING OF THE U.S. ARMS EMBARGO TO THE SUBCONTINENT WAS DISCUSSED BOTH AT THIS AND POSSIBLY OTHER SESSIONS: "EXPRESSING THEIR GRAVE ANXIETY AT THE ACTIONS TAKEN BY CERTAIN QUARTERS TO STEP UP THE ARMS RACE, THEY EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF THE SETTLEMENT OF INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS ONLY BY PEACEFUL MEANS THROUGH NEGOTIATIONS. (COMMENT: WE WONDER ABOUT THIS CURIOUS FORMULATION. WAS IT AN INDIAN FALL-BACK FROM A SOVIET EFFORT TO BE MORE EXPLICIT ABOUT THE SUBCONTINENT, OR A SOVIET FALL-BACK FROM AN INDIAN EFFORT TO BE MORE EXPLICIT. AS IT IS, IT SEEMS SO VAGUE THAT IT COULD REFER TO ANYTHING ALTHOUGH WE ASSUME IT DOES INDEED HAVE RELEVANCE TO THE U.S. ARMS DECISION.) AT THE SAME TIME THE JOINT COMMUNIQUE AVOIDS ANY SUGGESTION THAT QUESTIONS OF SOVIET ARMS SUPPLIES TO INDIA CAME UP FOR DISCUSSION AND IS SILENT ON DIEGO GARCIA UNLIKE THE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED HERE LAST DECEMBER AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE STATE VISIT OF GDR COUNCIL OF MINISTERS CHAIRMAN HORST SINDERMAN. IT SAYS NOTHING ABOUT MRS. GANDHI'S PLANS TO VISIT MOSCOW ALTHOUGH BEFORE GRECHKO LEFT DELHI HE TOLD NEWSMEN AT THE AIRPORT THAT MRS. GANDHI "MAYBE" WILL VISIT THE SOVIET UNION "SOON." DEFENSE MINISTER SINGH ACCEPTED AN INVITATION FROM GRECHKO DURING HIS VISIT, AND PRESUMABLY WILL JOIN MRS. ANDHI ON HER TRIP TO MOSCOW. THE CURRENT BETTING AMONG DIPLOMATS IN DELHI IS THAT THE VISIT WILL TAKE PLACE IN LATE SPRING.

3. APART FROM THE POSSIBLE ALLUSION TO THE LIFTING OF THE ARMS EMBARGO THE COMMUNIQUE THUS APPEARS TO HAVE BROKEN NO NEW GROUND. ALTHOUGH THE LEADER OF THE SOVIET DELEGATION TO THE ESCAP CONFERENCE MADE A POINT OF RECOMMENDING THE SOVIET ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY PROPOSAL TO FELLOW DELEGATES IN A SPEECH HERE FEBRUARY 27, THE GRECHKO PARTY HAD TO SETTLE FOR A LARGELY STANDARD STATEMENT INDICATING THAT BOTH SIDES "ATTACHED SPECIAL IMPORTANCE TO THE QUESTION OF PRESERVING AND STRENGTHENING OF PEACE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND STABILITY IN ASIA BY THE JOINT EFFORTS OF ALL STATES IN THE REGION." BOTH SIDES ALSO WELCOMED DETENTE, TERMING IT A PROCESS WHICH "SHOULD BE MADE IRREVERSIBLE AND SHOULD SPREAD TO ALL PARTS OF THE WORLD."

4. COMMENT: THE INDO-SOVIET COMMUNIQUE REPORTS THAT THE TALKS WERE HELD IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF "WARM FRIENDSHIP AND COMPLETE MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING." WE NOTE THAT THE ATMOSPHERE DURING SWARAN

SINGH'S VISIT (AT THAT TIME AS INDIAN FOREIGN MINISTER) TO MOSCOW IN SEPTEMBER 1974 WAS DESCRIBED SIMPLY AS ONE OF "CORDIALITY AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING." THE BARGAINING WAS REPORTEDLY TOUGH LAST SEPTEMBER, AS A VARIETY OF ECONOMIC ISSUES WERE THEN ON THE AGENDA. IT IS OF COURSE TOO EARLY TO MAKE ANY REAL ASSESSMENT OF GRECHKO'S TALKS, BUT ONE CAN AT LEAST SPECULATE ON THE BASIS OF THESE TWO MOST RECENT COMMUNIQUEES THAT DELHI AND MOSCOW FIND IT EASIER TO AGREE WHEN THE CONVERSATIONS TURN ON ARMS SUPPLY AND DEFENSE COLLABORATION. THE STICKING POINT MAY ARISE, HOWEVER, WHEN OFFICIALS IN DELHI AND MOSCOW TRY TO TRANSLATE THE GENERAL UNDERSTANDINGS APPARENTLY REACHED HERE INTO SPECIFIC TERMS AND TRANSACTIONS; THAT IS, WHEN THE ECONOMIC DIMENSIONS OF INDO-SOVIET MILITARY COOPERATION ARE FULLY DEALT WITH.

SCHNEIDER

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